

REMARKS

I. Introduction

Claims 1 to 7 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Objection to Claims 1 to 4

Claims 1 to 4 were objected to due to various alleged informalities. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 to 4, as amended, overcome the present objection. Therefore, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

III. Rejection of Claims 1 to 7 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1 to 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 4,168,878 ("Risser et al.") and U.S. Patent No. 5,135,417 ("Stanevich"). Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Risser et al. and Stanevich does not render unpatentable the present claims for the following reasons.

Claims 1 and 5 relate to an electrical connector in the form of a socket contact. Claim 1 has been amended herein without prejudice to recite that the free ends of the contact lamellae are configured to come to rest against the spring element in direct proximity to the contact point. Claim 5 has been amended herein without prejudice to recite that the contact lamellae are configured to interact with the knife blade and contact the spring element in direct proximity to the at least one contact point. Support for these amendments may be found in the Specification, for example, at p. 1, lines 25 to 30, p. 3, lines 1 to 26, p. 4, lines 17 to 21, p. 4, line 32 to p. 5, line 9, and Figures 1 and 2.

Risser et al. purportedly relate to pin and socket type electrical terminals. The Final Office Action admits that Risser does not disclose "after further insertion of the blade, the free ends configured to rest against the spring element and the contact lamellae configured to deform." Stanevich purportedly relates to a dual usage electrical/electronic pin terminal system. For the reasons detailed below, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Risser et al. and Stanevich does not disclose, or even suggest, that the free ends of the contact lamellae are configured to come to rest against the spring element in direct proximity to the contact point, as required by amended claim 1, or that the contact lamellae are configured to interact with the knife blade so as to contact the spring element in direct proximity to the at least one contact point, as required by amended claim 5.

The plug connector of the present application has an inner contact part 2 and a retention spring 3, which at least partially encloses the inner contact part 2. A knife blade 14 inserted into the plug connector contacts the inner contact part 2 at contact point 10 forcing the lamellae 7 apart such that the free ends 7' of the lamellae 7, which are in direct proximity to the free ends 7', contact the inner surface of the retention spring 3 in direct proximity to the contact point 10. The proximity of the contact point 10 (between the knife blade 14 and the lamellae 7) and the point where the free ends 7' of the lamellae 7 contact the inner surface of the retention spring 3 assures that the contact between the lamellae 7 and the retention spring 3 adequately transmits a bracing effect to the lamellae 7 at contact point 10. In contrast, the point on the Stanevich device adjacent reference number 20 (where the springs 17, 18 contact retention spring 14) is on an opposite end of the springs 17, 18 and is spaced away from contact point 24 of springs 17, 18. Therefore, the contact between the Stanevich retention spring 14 and springs 17, 18 does not provide the same level of bracing support at the contact point between element 11 and the springs 17, 18 (adjacent reference number 24), as achieved by the electrical connector embodiment configuration of amended claims 1 and 5. Therefore, for the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Risser et al. and Stanevich does not disclose, or even suggest, all of the limitations of claims 1 and 5.

In rejecting a claim under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the Examiner bears the initial burden of presenting a prima facie case of obviousness. In re Rijckaert, 9 F.3d 1531, 1532, 28 U.S.P.Q.2d 1955, 1956 (Fed. Cir. 1993). To establish prima facie obviousness, three criteria must be satisfied. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation to modify or combine reference teachings. In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988). This teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination must be found in the prior art and not based on the application disclosure. In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991). Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. In re Merck & Co., Inc., 800 F.2d 1091, 231 U.S.P.Q. 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986). Third, the prior art reference(s) must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations. In re Royka, 490 F.2d 981, 180 U.S.P.Q. 580 (C.C.P.A. 1974). As indicated above, the combination of Risser et al. and Stanevich does not disclose, or even suggest, all of the limitations of claims 1 and 5. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 5 are not obvious.

Claims 1 to 4 depend from claim 1 and therefore include all of the limitations of claim 1. Claims 6 and 7 depend from claim 5 and therefore include all of the limitations of claim 5. As more fully set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of

Risser et al. and Stanevich does not disclose, or even suggest, all of the limitations of claim 1, from which claims 2 to 4 depend, and claim 5, from which claims 6 and 7 depend. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Risser et al. and Stanevich does not render unpatentable these dependent claims for at least the same reasons provided above in support of the patentability of claims 1 and 5, respectively. In re Fine, supra (any dependent claim that depends from a non-obvious independent claim is non-obvious).

IV. Conclusion

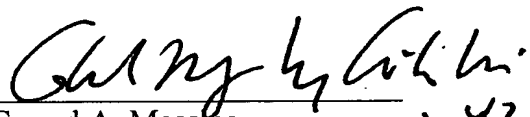
It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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